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LETTER DATED 1 FEBRUARY 1995 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF RWANDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

In response to a number of requests for information on the status of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) radio in Rwanda, I would like to provide you with an update on that situation based on information I have received from the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

The Government of Rwanda has given authorization for Radio UNAMIR to operate. However, because of technical difficulties, broadcasts have not begun. These problems have developed for a number of reasons.

The technical personnel responsible for setting up the radio were incorrectly advised by UNAMIR on the type of equipment that could be used in Rwanda. The relevant authorities in Rwanda were not consulted. As a result, the equipment was almost identical to that used by the national radio station, Radio Rwanda.

The placement of the transmitters presented another problem. Initially, the engineers, in consultation with UNAMIR personnel, decided to set up the transmitters inside the UNAMIR compound.

Subsequently, UNAMIR, disregarding all international regulations, conducted transmission tests of its radio in November without authorization from the Government of Rwanda. When those transmissions were detected by our engineers and their location was determined, the Government of Rwanda made a verbal protest to UNAMIR. Only then did UNAMIR request permission to broadcast.

The request was discussed in a Cabinet meeting and permission was immediately given to UNAMIR. Once permission was granted, our engineers requested access to UNAMIR's radio equipment and information on the tests conducted, but getting access took some time. It was then noticed that Radio UNAMIR had chosen frequencies that were very close to those of Radio Rwanda and which would interfere with the national radio. We had to request them to change the frequencies. That operation caused further delay.

As I mentioned above, as a result of UNAMIR's desire to locate the equipment inside its compound, difficulties were encountered because the compound is not necessarily located in places that are high in altitude and that would facilitate transmission. Their engineers later realized that the transmitters would not be effective. They faced the option of replacing them with more powerful transmitters, which would cost more than initially budgeted for, or placing those transmitters at high altitudes (on mountain peaks).

UNAMIR decided to use the facilities used by our national radio and Rwandatel (the telephone company). UNAMIR was informed that, since its equipment was more powerful than that used by the national radio and Rwandatel, it would cause interference and even disable our communication system. The Government of Rwanda proposed to UNAMIR other sites that were equally high in altitude, but UNAMIR has been reluctant to accept those sites because they do not facilitate helicopter landing. They were advised that they can gain access to the sites on foot and that the equipment can be carried by their personnel.

All the above-mentioned problems are almost solved. There are still some minor problems concerning the frequencies, but the Government of Rwanda is willing to overlook them and allow Radio UNAMIR to start broadcasting. Indeed, UNAMIR contends that the calibration and tuning tests of the new frequencies that were allocated to them had been conducted in London by the British Broadcasting Corporation and therefore they do not have the instruments to do those tests in Rwanda. Another problem exists. Although UNAMIR accepted some of the alternative sites for their transmitters, they insist on using some of the sites used by Radio Rwanda and Rwandatel.

In summary, the delay in the starting of Radio UNAMIR is caused by the following:

(a) UNAMIR failed to follow internationally recognized procedures for starting an independent radio in any country;

(b) Problems of design and the choice of location by UNAMIR engineers;

(c) UNAMIR has, for some unknown reason, resisted giving to the Government the specifications of their equipment.

However, with the cooperation of the Special Representative, Mr. Khan, and the UNAMIR Force Commander, General Toussignant, most of the problems have been solved and Radio UNAMIR will start broadcasting very soon. It should be noted, however, that Radio UNAMIR is actually five radios: two in Kigali, one in Gikongoro, one in Byumba and one in Kibuye. The entire system may not start operating at the same time because there is still the problem of location of the transmitters. Broadcasting will start with three transmitters.

I hope that, with these explanations, the Security Council will understand that the delays were not caused by the Government of Rwanda.

I would be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Manzi BAKURAMUTSA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
of Rwanda to the United Nations